



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 152

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2006

No. 89

Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM DEMINT, a Senator from the State of South Carolina.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Father Daniel Coughlin, Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives, will lead us in prayer.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

As one Nation, indivisible, constant in vigilance, seeking liberty and justice for all, we place all our fears, anxieties, problems, and concerns under Your protection, Almighty God.

We pray for our troops, first responders in times of emergency, peacekeepers, and all who fight the war against terrorism.

This Senate Chamber also seeks Your guidance in all decisionmaking today, that we may prove ourselves worthy of the noble sacrifice offered by the men and women in uniform. Motivated by their bravery and willingness to shed their blood for our life and liberty as a Nation, all Americans ask what is it You require of us that we may become the virtuous people responsible to uphold the sound principles that wrought this Nation into being.

May law and order not only be the words echoed in the halls of government and the courts of this land, but let us give firm evidence to our promise to uphold the Constitution of this Nation by deeds.

May the ways of justice and peace flow from the way we live and by the common practice of business and the daily discourse of its people.

Lord, may we be a people truthful in our words and committed to action that will exhibit justice and lead to peace—now and forever. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM DEMINT led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 11, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM DEMINT, a Senator from the State of South Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. DEMINT thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

PROGRAM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we have the first 30 minutes of the session set aside for a period of morning business. Following that time, we will return to the consideration of the Homeland Security appropriations bill. As I announced yesterday, we will finish that bill this week. Therefore, if Senators have amendments, they should come to the floor and offer them. The two managers were here yesterday and will be on the Senate floor shortly and ready for business. Therefore, Senators can expect some votes today relative to the Homeland Security appropriations bill, and we will alert everyone when

we lock in a time certain. The Senate will also recess today from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. for our weekly policy meetings.

DEFICIT DECLINE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I wish to take a few moments to comment on some very good news the administration is releasing right now as I speak.

As required by law, the administration today releases its updated estimates for this year's Federal budget. Compared to their estimate last winter that the Federal deficit would top \$423 billion, today's news that the deficit will decline to \$296 billion is a testament to a dynamic and growing U.S. economy. That is 30 percent less than what had been forecast in just February.

It is an economy that exceeds \$13 trillion today, the largest of any country in the world. It is an economy with an annual growth rate that has consistently exceeded that of the other advanced economies around the world—England, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, and, indeed, the entire Euro area. It is an economy that has grown \$3.2 trillion since the end of 2000. It is an economy battered by corporate scandals, the terrible devastation wrought by September 11, and the worst natural disaster in centuries to visit our shores. It is an economy that has grown despite the more than tripling of oil prices in less than 5 years.

All this while fighting an ongoing battle to defeat global terrorism.

It is an economy that has grown steadily for the last 4 years and 8 months. It is an economy that has experienced job growth every month for the last 34 consecutive months and added over 5.4 million jobs since September 2003. It is an economy that provided 151 million Americans jobs just last month—the largest ever in history. It is an economy with a 4.6 percent unemployment rate last month

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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which was below the average of the 1960s, below the average of the 1970s, below the average of the 1980s, and below the average of the 1990s.

In short, it is an economy that has grown because of the grit and spine of the American worker, whose productivity exceeds that of all others. It has also grown because of explicit policies designed to lower tax burdens on the American public, to reduce the burdens of unnecessary and costly Government regulations, to limit the growth of unnecessary Federal spending, and then to step back and let the American workers release their great entrepreneurial competitive spirit.

The result: For the first 9 months of this fiscal year, total Government receipts rose by nearly 13 percent compared to the same period last year. That increase represents the second highest rate of growth for that 9-month period in the past 25 years, surpassed only by last year's strong record. Corporate tax receipts have grown over 26 percent, and individual tax receipts have grown 14 percent the first 9 months of this year.

When this strong growth in tax receipts is laid alongside spending that has grown about half as fast, it is no wonder the estimates released today show the Federal deficit declining rapidly.

We are making progress to bring our spending and revenue into line. Despite the cost of the Global War on Terrorism, despite the drain to our Treasury from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and increasing costs of our health care system, we are making progress.

More needs to be done, and we cannot rest on the progress made to date. We must continue to limit the growth of unnecessary, parochial spending in the Federal budget. We must continue to find ways to lower the cost of providing health care to our seniors and to workers and their families. We must find new sources of energy for the future. We must invest the taxpayers' dollars wisely in those areas which will continue to increase our competitive advantage in a growing, competitive global economy. We must continue to lower tax burdens on families and businesses so they can plan, invest, and continue to contribute to a growing economy in the years ahead. We must do all this and more while continuing to strive to achieve fiscal balance. Today's figures confirm for me that we can and we will achieve these blessings for future generations.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was not planning on speaking today, but I must respond to the distinguished majority leader's comments about what is happening to our economy.

One need only look at a newspaper. It doesn't matter which newspaper one

picks up. The one I picked up in the cloakroom is the Washington Post business section. The headline of the Washington Post business section reads:

Tax Cuts Credited; Long-Term Outlook Still Seen as Bleak.

And you flip down through the article, it says, among other things:

But the favorable news about the money rolling into the Treasury stems largely from shifts in the economy, including fatter corporate profits, executive bonuses and stock market gains, that reflect growing inequality, the administration's critics contend. And even the White House acknowledges that in the long run, the nation's fiscal outlook [seems very] bleak.

We need only look on the next page where the story is carried over:

The administration's estimate was widely derided at the time; budget experts said aides to President Bush were overestimating the red ink so they could claim credit later when the actual figures came in below forecast.

This is what they did. Earlier in the year, they talked about how big the deficit would be, and they planned that because everyone knew the deficit would be smaller than that. Smaller? Mr. President, \$300 billion—is that anything to brag about? I think not.

The news article further says:

But revenue often soars or plummets unpredictably with the stock market, and a troubling story emerges from a look at the main sources of the latest revenue bonanza, according to the administration's critics.

"This all relates to the widening income disparities between high-income individuals and the rest of the population. . . ."

Our economy is not in good shape. The distinguished majority leader brags about 5.5 million jobs having been created. During the administration of President Clinton, 23 million jobs were created. We went months during this administration when no new jobs were created. During the years of President Clinton, 23 million new jobs were created, and they were high-quality jobs.

During the last 3 years of the Clinton administration, we didn't have a \$300 billion deficit that people are bragging about today on the Senate floor. We paid down the debt. We spent less money than we were taking in. We brought down the national debt by about a half trillion dollars.

So, please, let's not boast about a \$300 billion deficit. Any statistic one looks at recognizes the rich in America are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle class is being squeezed. I hope some reality will come to the situation we find now on the Senate floor where the majority leader is bragging about how great it is that we have a \$300 billion deficit. I don't think that is good news. I think it is bad news.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield whatever time he consumes to the distinguished Senator from Illinois.

GUANTANAMO BAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my leader on the Democratic side.

Yesterday I visited Guantanamo Bay, along with my colleague, Senator GEORGE ALLEN of Virginia. RADM Harry Harris, commander of the Joint Task Force in Guantanamo, spent most of his day giving us a very informative briefing and a tour of the facilities.

I thank the admiral, and I thank all the soldiers and sailors at Guantanamo for their service to our country. They are great Americans doing a difficult job in a dangerous place.

I met with several young men and women from Illinois. I had lunch with them. As I always do, I left with even greater respect for our men and women in uniform. They are truly our best. They deserve our gratitude every single day.

I am old enough to remember the Vietnam war. It was a divisive war politically, and our divisions were taken out on the soldiers. That should never happen again. We can debate the policies of the United States on the floor of the Senate, but we should never debate the courage and commitment of our men and women in uniform. It is beyond reproach.

For some time, I have been critical of the Bush administration's policies on interrogation and detention. I believe these policies are not true to American values. They have hurt our efforts in the war on terrorism. They put our brave men and women in uniform at even greater risk.

Let me be clear. My criticism of the administration's policies does not reflect in any way on the fine men and women in the military. In fact, I think the Bush administration's policies in many cases have done a disservice to our military. The men and women serving at Guantanamo have a difficult job. The administration's confusing, conflicting, and, according to the recent Supreme Court decision, illegal policies have made their job even more difficult.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration unilaterally decided to set aside treaties which the Senate had ratified and which had been followed and honored by previous administrations of both political parties—treaties that have served us well for generations.